



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large

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Tending to Your Teeth

Terrific Teeth

Do you take good care of your teeth? Good tooth care is very important for your health.

In recent years, more kids are avoiding dental problems, such as tooth decay. Experts say this is because more kids are:

- using toothpaste with fluoride
- brushing properly
- visiting the dentist.

Even so, by the time they are 17, at least three-quarters of all kids will have had one or more cavities. Many will even have lost a permanent tooth.

Experts say neglecting your teeth can result in bad nutrition, poor appearance and pain. Untreated tooth decay can make it hard for kids to sleep, eat or pay attention in school.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. In this issue, The Mini Page takes a good look at teeth.



photo by Master Sgt. Kimberly Yeargan-Siers, courtesy U.S. Air Force

This dentist gently examines a kid's teeth at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. The dentist's office is a safe, good place for kids.



photo by Senior Airman Francis Lalic, courtesy U.S. Air Force

Every year during Children's Dental Health Month, the 43rd Medical Dental Operations Squadron visits a child-development center at Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. Here a staff sergeant demonstrates the teeth cleaning a patient would get at the dentist's office.

What is a cavity?

A **cavity** is a hole, or a space where part of a material has been removed. A cavity in your tooth is a hole in your tooth.

Cavities are caused by bacteria, sugar and **plaque** (PLAK). Plaque is the sticky stuff coating your teeth. You may have noticed it after you eat or when you wake up in the morning.

Try this experiment: Before brushing your teeth one morning, scrape them with your fingernail. You will see some white gunk. That is plaque. Bacteria in your mouth make plaque constantly. That is why it is important to brush regularly.



Taking care of your teeth

Experts say it is easy to take care of your teeth. Just follow these simple steps:

- Use toothpaste with **fluoride**. Fluoride is a material that helps harden the protective enamel on your teeth. It can also kill the bacteria that cause cavities.
- Limit your sweets.
- Drink water and milk instead of soda pop, juice or drinks like Kool-Aid. These drinks have a lot of sugar.
- Brush and floss. Brush at least twice a day, in the morning and at night. Floss at least once a day.



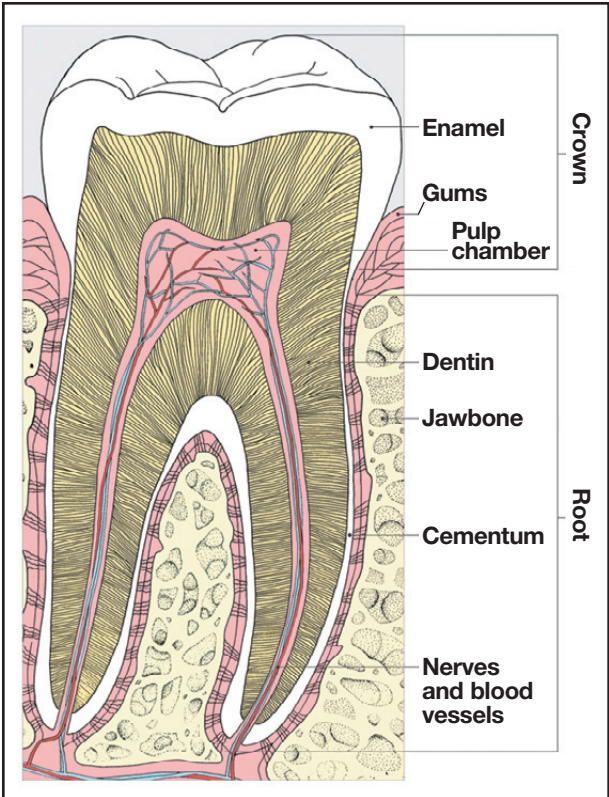
Dental Exam

What a tooth is made of

- **Enamel** (eh-NA-muhl) is the white outer cover on your teeth. It is the hardest substance in the human body, even harder than bone. Enamel, made of minerals and protein, protects your teeth.
- **Dentin** is the next layer of the tooth. It is the second hardest substance in the body. About two-thirds of each tooth is dentin. It is made up of calcium and other minerals and is similar to bone.
- **Pulp** makes up the inside of the tooth. Blood vessels and nerves live inside the pulp. If the tooth gets infected, this area is what hurts. Pulp is a kind of gel substance, something like a Jell-O fruit cup.
- **Cementum** (si-MEN-tum) attaches the tooth to the jawbone. You can't see cementum, since it is below the gumline.

Teeth are slippery. Cementum, which is rough, is one of the few substances that actually stick to the teeth.

How do you think a non-stick covering on your teeth protects them?



Find each part of the tooth in this diagram.

Tooth test



To see how hard it is to stick anything to your teeth, try sticking a small piece of tape to them. Does it stick, or does it slide off?

Counting teeth

Children first get about 20 baby teeth. These usually drop out when kids are between 6 and 12 years old, when permanent teeth start growing in.

Most people have 32 permanent teeth. However, many people are being born with fewer teeth, sometimes as few as 28.

Here are the teeth most people have, with half of each kind on the top and bottom:

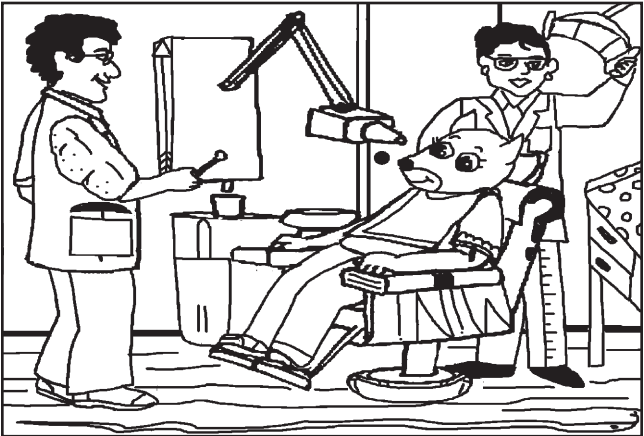
- Eight **incisors** (in-SI-zers) to help us tear food such as meat. Incisors have a sharp point at the end.
- Four pointed **canines** (KAY-nines) that also help tear food. Canines help the rest of our teeth get in position to bite in the right places. When they aren't there, people bite their tongues or cheeks more often.
- Eight **premolars**.
- Eight **molars** (MOE-luhrs). Premolars and molars are flat or round on top, and are used for grinding food. Most of our chewing is done by molars.
- Four **wisdom teeth**, or extra molars. Wisdom teeth can crowd out other teeth, and often they have to be pulled.

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Mini Spy ...



Mini Spy's dentist loves to tell her jokes when she gets her checkups. See if you can find: • question mark



- cheese wedge
- word MINI
- book
- sailboat
- ruler
- ice cream bar
- arrow
- snake
- number 7
- bread loaf
- bell
- canoe

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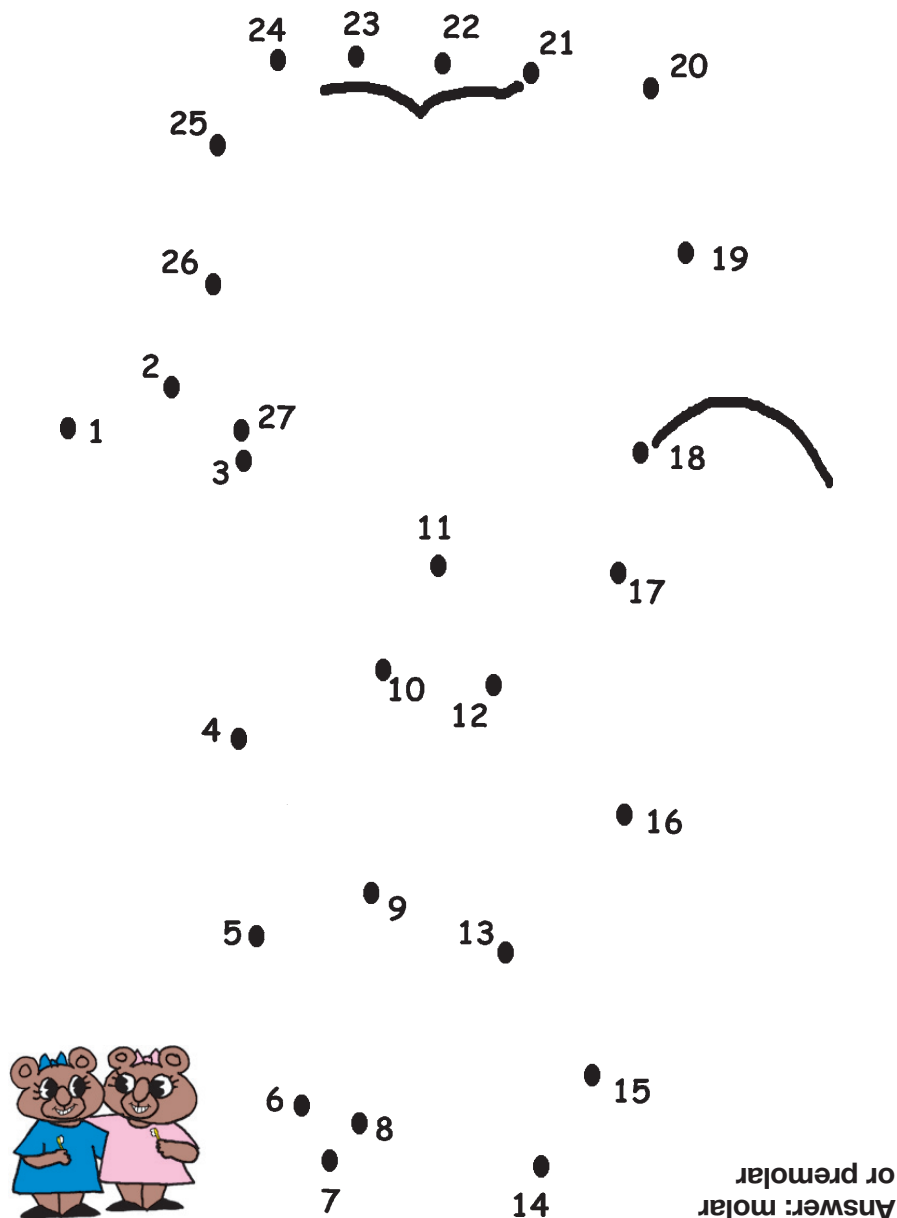
Dental Health TRY 'N FIND

Words that remind us of teeth are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally. See if you can find: DENTIST, ENAMEL, DENTIN, CEMENTUM, PULP, FLUORIDE, BRUSH, FLOSS, INCISOR, MOLAR, CANINE, CARE, EAT, BITE, FOOD, GUMS, PLAQUE, BABY, PERMANENT, TIME, BARBER, MONKS, DAY.

LOOK AT THESE PEARLY WHITES!

C	F	M	U	T	N	E	M	E	C	H	S	U	R	B
D	A	O	W	V	C	P	E	D	I	R	O	U	L	F
E	B	R	O	K	A	B	U	M	O	N	K	S	G	P
N	F	A	E	D	N	I	V	L	E	M	I	T	U	L
T	L	K	B	M	I	T	L	W	P	D	A	Y	M	A
I	O	E	K	Y	N	E	N	I	T	N	E	D	S	Q
S	S	A	V	L	E	K	R	O	S	I	C	N	I	U
T	S	T	R	A	L	O	M	L	E	M	A	N	E	E
R	E	B	R	A	B	T	N	E	N	A	M	R	E	P

Go dot to dot and color this tooth. What kind do you think it is?



Answer: molar or premolar

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Rookie Cookie's Recipe Nutty Cheese Log

You'll need:

- 1 (8-ounce) package reduced-fat cream cheese
- 1/2 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans, divided
- crackers

What to do:

1. Allow cream cheese to soften in a bowl.
2. Mix in other cheeses and 1/4 cup chopped pecans.
3. Using a sheet of aluminum foil, shape cheese mixture into an 8-inch log.
4. Roll log in remaining chopped pecans.
5. Chill to combine flavors. Serve with crackers.



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Meet Helen Mirren



Helen Mirren stars as Elinor in the movie "Inkheart." She has starred in several other movies, including "National Treasure: Book of Secrets." She has won many awards for her appearances in TV series, movies and on stage. She has also directed and produced movies.

Helen, 63, was born as Illiana Lydia Petrovna Mironova in London, England. She once worked at an amusement park trying to get people to go on the rides.

She began acting in the National Youth Theatre in England. She then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, a famous acting troupe in England.

She has homes in London, Los Angeles and France. She does charity work for Oxfam, trying to prevent the illegal sale of weapons to war-torn countries.

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MIGHTY
FUNNY'S

Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?

Dennis: What is the difference between a baseball lover in New York and a dentist?

Denise: One roots for the Yanks and the other yanks for the roots!

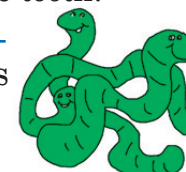


Darla: What did the lawyer say to the dentist?

Dory: "Do you promise to pull the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth?"

Drake: What type of candy do most gums enjoy?

Darcy: Gummy worms!



Tooth Tales

Animal teeth

Animal teeth are similar to human teeth. You can tell a lot about what an animal eats by looking at its teeth. Animals use their teeth as tools and weapons too. Here are some examples of animals and their teeth:

- Rodents use their extra-large incisors to tear and cut material. For example, a beaver uses its two really big front incisors to break apart wood to build dams.



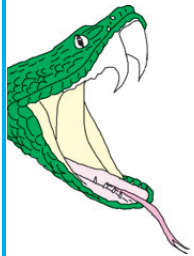
- Dogs have big canines. In fact, the family of dogs gets its scientific name, **canine**, from these teeth.



Dogs use their canine teeth like we use fingers, to pick things up. If your dog lost its canines, it couldn't bring you the ball anymore.

Dogs have smaller molars compared with other animals. They have to swallow big bites of food because they can't chew the food well.

- Animals such as cows and horses have huge molars. These animals eat a lot of plants, and their molars help them grind grain or grass into small bits.



- Poisonous snakes have teeth with a hollow tip filled with venom.

The Mini Page thanks Dr. Scott Hamilton, director of pediatric dentistry, University of Nebraska Medical Center, for help with this issue.

Look through your newspaper for stories about animals. What kind of teeth do they have?



photo by Robbin Cresswell, courtesy U.S. Air Force

Experts say children should start getting dental care when they are very young. You should see a dentist twice a year throughout your life.

This mother holds her daughter while the director of the 59th Dental Squadron examines the little girl's teeth at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

Dental history

Be glad you are living in 2009! Going to the dentist today is usually a pleasant, painless experience.

Until about 100 years ago, if your tooth got infected, it would hurt so much that someone would have to pull it out. The person pulling your tooth might not have even been a doctor. He might have been the barber.

In the Middle Ages, about 1,500 to 1,000 years ago, most doctoring was done by monks.



Barbers were often asked to help the monks with surgery and dental care.

Barbers traveled from monastery to monastery to shave the monks' heads. They knew how to use sharp instruments. They became good with these tools.

Then, about 1,000 years ago, the church forbade monks from practicing surgery. Barbers took over the job. As late as the 1800s, some barbers still did dental work in remote areas.

In the 1800s, **anesthetics** (a-nus-THET-ics), or medicines to block pain, were introduced.

Next week The Mini Page celebrates Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday.

Brushing and flossing

It is important to spend two whole minutes brushing your teeth each time — one minute on the top teeth and one minute on the bottom.

Keep a timer or clock in the bathroom and time yourself. If you don't, you may not brush long enough.

Gently brush the front, back and bottoms of your teeth. Gently brush your tongue too. This helps prevent bad breath.

Flossing helps get out food particles that may be stuck between your teeth. Pull the floss up and down. Don't slide it from the front to the back.



Losing teeth

If a permanent tooth breaks or falls out, put the piece of tooth in milk. Don't put it in water. Try not to handle the tooth or scrub it off.

If your entire tooth falls out, try to put it back in the tooth **socket**, or gap, in your mouth.

Go to the dentist right away!

If you lose baby teeth, don't worry. Just put them under the pillow for the tooth fairy!



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